

LINCOLN COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Lincoln County Courthouse

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April 10, 2000

Federal Caucus Comment Record
C/O Bonneville Power Administration
707 W. Main St., Suite 5000
Spokane, Wa 99201.

Re: Salmon Recovery

Hundreds of scientists, agencies and politicians cannot agree on the best strategy for salmon recovery programs. There is no consensus as to what to do and despite claims to the contrary no majority of any group favors one approach over another.

Idaho has supplied over 20 million-acre feet of water for flow augmentation over the last 10 years. In spite of this, there is no documentation that this added water has assisted the spring and summer Chinook runs and investigations relating to fall Chinook show only marginal increases which generally are considered to be the result of temperature rather than flow.

To take an additional one (1) million-acre feet of water for flow augmentation from the Upper Snake River Basin would dry up more than 600,00 acres of productive farmland at an annual cost of over \$430 million and cause the loss of thousands of agricultural jobs.

Regardless of the claims of environmental groups, all of the options proposed by the federal government, except one, include the existing level of flow augmentation from Idaho. Flow augmentation at the present level includes 427,000 acre feet from the Upper Snake River Basin, 237,000 acre feet from Idaho Power's Hells Canyon Complex and from 1.5-1.9 million acre feet of water annually from Dworshak Reservoir. The "status quo" is well over two (2) million acre-feet per year.

Taking an additional one (1) million acre-feet of Idaho water each year means that many of Idaho's reservoirs in dry years would be empty up to 10% of the time. Resident fisheries, wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities would be devastated along with irrigated agriculture.

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While testimony at previous hearings has centered on dam breaching, it is clear that the federal agencies involved and the environmental groups believe that flow augmentation from Idaho must continue even if the dams are breached. These statements have been made by Idaho Rivers United, American Rivers and Trout Unlimited. These groups claim that Idaho irrigators should support dam breaching in order to protect Idaho water. Breaching of the lower four (4) Snake River dams will not protect Idaho water. The only thing that will protect Idaho water is an understanding by NMFS that flow augmentation will not lead to recovery nor is there any identifiable scientific support for continued augmentation.

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Many scientists believe the problem with salmon returns lies with ocean conditions and predators. While these issues have been marginal studied, much more work needs to be done. If ocean conditions are indeed the culprit, nothing that is done on the Columbia or Snake River system will help recover listed salmon stocks.

Studies now conclusively demonstrate that between 95-98 percent of listed salmon stocks are alive when transported through barges to the mouth of the Columbia River. However, less than one half of one percent of the adults return. These numbers suggest ocean conditions may indeed be the major problem.

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Jerry Nance, Chairman


Marlynn Brookbank, Member


Lawrence Calkins, Member